

## **State Health Officials Upgrade Michigan's Flu Season Status**

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LANSING - Health officials said Monday there is still time for Michigan citizens to receive a flu vaccine, as influenza activity levels are only beginning to increase across the state. Dr. Gregory Holzman, State Chief Medical Executive, is encouraging all Michigan citizens to seek a vaccine if they have not already done so.

"Health care providers around the state have ample supplies of vaccine this season, so absolutely everyone should receive a flu shot," Holzman said. "Receiving a vaccine is the single best way to prevent against getting the flu, and by our latest estimate, tens of thousands of doses are still available."

Holzman said it takes two weeks for the vaccine to reach its maximum effectiveness once it is administered, meaning individuals who get a vaccine today would still be protected during the heart of Michigan's flu season.

On January 4, Michigan was upgraded to local levels of influenza activity by the Centers For Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta. Local is the third level of activity as defined by the federal government, with regional and widespread being levels four and five, respectively.

Sporadic flu cases are often seen in Michigan during November and activity often begins to increase thereafter. Activity typically peaks in late January through February, but can sometimes peak earlier or later, depending on the strain of flu and severity of the season.

MDCH has several systems in place to detect influenza including a network of clinicians and hospital emergency departments throughout the state that report persons with flu-like illness, laboratories that report positive test results for influenza, and school-based absenteeism reports.

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death.

Every year in the United States, on average:

- 5% to 20% of the population get the flu;
- More than 200,000 people are hospitalized from flu complications, and;
- Roughly 36,000 people die from flu.

Some people, such as older people, young children, and people with certain health conditions, are at high risk for serious flu complications. So far this year, state officials estimate that nearly 2.4 million doses of flu vaccine have been shipped to Michigan.